



OPFAM

Dominican Family Matters

A Newsletter for the Dominican Family in Australia, New Zealand, Solomons and Papua New Guinea

Woe to us if we do not preach the Gospel!

Motto for the years leading up to 800th celebration in 2016;

1st February 2011

As part of the preparation towards the 800th year celebration,
the Order's motto for 2011 is:

"We hear them speaking in our own tongues of the marvelous acts of God" (Acts 2:11):
Preaching and Culture / Community Preaching

Dominican Thought for the Week

The Order's Jubilee Prayer, leading to the celebrations in 2016:

God of Mercy,

In your eternal Wisdom, you called your servant Dominic to set off on a journey of faith as itinerant pilgrim and preacher of grace. With your Word of gentle Truth in his heart and on his lips, Dominic invited the first sisters and brothers to join him in a life of contemplative obedience in the service of the holy preaching.

As we commemorate this Jubilee, we ask you to breathe the Spirit of the risen Christ once again into our hearts and minds. Re-create us, so that we might faithfully and joyfully proclaim the gospel of peace, through the same Christ, our Lord.

AMEN.

As we begin a new year, the Dominican Family is very conscious of the plight of members in so many countries:

Queensland, Northern NSW, Victoria - the floods and cyclone
Western Australia – severe storms

New Zealand - earthquake

Brazil – torrential rain and mudslides

Sri Lanka – 1 million homeless after flooding, and civil unrest

Iraq – ongoing trauma as few remaining Christians try to survive

Moscow – bombings

Pakistan and Afghanistan – Christians under seige

Egypt – Friars and Sisters and Laity - current chaos

Extracts from Letter from Egypt

Sr Mary Ann Pevas OP (Lecturer in Economics at Winona State University, Minnesota, USA, who takes student groups to Egypt to study Islamic Banking). Sunday, January 30.

Dear Friends,

Since several of you have asked, I thought I would share some of my thoughts on the current situation in Egypt. It is very serious and has been simmering for a long time. Some facts and why the world is watching closely. First, the median age of Egypt is 24. Second, Egypt controls the Suez Canal which is a channel for the transport of 10% of the world's oil. The city of Suez where much of the violence has taken place is right on the canal. Third, the protesters have no religious agenda. Egyptians, Muslim and Christian, are together in this crisis. But the crisis is real, spreading, and will likely get worse before it is over.

For me these days are bittersweet. 'Bitter' because people are killed and many are wounded in the clash between the protesters and the government forces up to this moment. Who are these forces? They are two: the 'police' and the military. The 'control' or riot police are employees of the government and can be brutal. They carry weapons and manage the jails and the prisoners and the treatment of the prisoners. They are the forces that arrest persons deemed to be political liabilities and often torture them. This force is the one that you saw on the news trying to control the thousands of protesters but to no avail. Many of them lost their weapons to the protesters as they were on duty for 3 days and nights consecutively until they suddenly disappeared on Friday leaving the cities without the normal security. Some say they felt deserted by Mubarek so they just left their patrols, opened some of the jails and let the prisoners go. Some of those prisoners are literally 'criminals' and are now on the streets. In the first few days the police stations were set on fire and destroyed as were several other government buildings.

The other government force is the military which is made up of loyal officers and of 'drafted' young men who are serving 2 years of mandatory service. It is the largest military force in the Middle East after Israel and the most highly trained. Today, Sunday, the military are out in force guarding strategic locations like the Egyptian Museum, the 'Ring Road' which surrounds Cairo, and other places considered of importance by the government. The officers are professional and take their orders from the President, Mubarek. It is still unclear where their real loyalty lies if they are put into a position to choose between the protesters and Mubarek. The officers may give orders to shoot civilians, but the 'conscripts' may simply refuse to follow those orders. All of these men are Egyptians, but the conscripts are friends and/or members of the extended families of the protesters. Will they side with the protesters or will they stay loyal to the regime? Let's hope they will not have to choose.

Before the demonstrations began last Tuesday security throughout Egypt was tight. When I would take groups on study tours there we HAD to have armed guards accompany us everywhere. The police were everywhere - every corner, every street, every mosque, every church. Now they are gone. Consequently, large areas are without protection except those places where the military are visible and patrolling. One such place is the Dominican Priory in Cairo. I spoke with Fr. Jean Druel this morning and he said there are 5 military tanks surrounding their property to protect it. Their employees are having a difficult time getting to work so they are not coming until this is all over. The Fathers are staying inside the priory and thank you for your prayers. The priory is surrounded by a high wall and rod iron gates even without the tanks. They are all fine.

Without the protection of the police which the people are accustomed to, neighborhoods are vulnerable. Looters are taking advantage of the situation by trying to ransack any place of value. To prevent that, the men in neighborhoods are forming groups of their own using clubs, swords, and whatever to protect their properties. It is against the law for anyone except the military to have a gun. (The guns you see held by civilians are most likely stolen). These civilian protectors will know who does not belong in their neighborhood and such intruders will be told to leave. I have two friends of mine, Ahmed and Yahya, who are protesters by day and members of the neighborhood watch groups by night. Yahya told me this morning (Sunday) that a young man very near him in the protests was shot by the police and killed. Yahya is careful but feels it is his duty to speak out. He is also a very meek and mild young man who doesn't see much of a future for himself without a change in government. He is literally protesting for his future. Pray that he remains unharmed.

The situation is 'sweet' because maybe the protests will continue long enough and bring down Mubarek and his government before too many more people are killed or injured. The anger has been among the people, especially among the young people, for many years. The young are very educated, but have no jobs and a lot of time on their hands. Their future is bleak. To earn any decent amount of money to build a future they have to move to oil producing neighboring countries like Kuwait and the Gulf States to find work. And even there they are taken advantage of. Many of the young people I know in Egypt have told me often that 'their country' has many, many resources, but those resources are squandered by the government and through the widespread corruption the money is taken abroad until the ministers can flee or retire and live in comfort while the Egyptian people live in squalor. One young man told me his country has done nothing for him. We Dominicans have done more and he is grateful.

Are the protests violent? At first they were not but the longer this goes on, it will spread and become increasingly violent. And I do not see it ending until Mubarek actually leaves. Tomorrow will tell us whether or not it will. The police are supposed to return to the streets. Will there be a clash between them and the military? Will the protesters become the direct targets of the numerous guns? But the unrest will most likely continue until Mubarek leaves Egypt. Where will he go? Not to any country where the women must wear the hijab because his wife is very liberal and has never worn anything religious. She has worked for women's rights in Egypt assertively and consistently for years. That rules out Saudi Arabia where the Tunisian President went.

Is the unrest all over Cairo? No, at least not in the numbers that we see in the media. The best way I can describe what is happening is to ask you to reflect back to the 60s and the protests against the Vietnam War. The protests then took place in many, many places but were contained. The same is in Cairo. They started in the downtown area and are still confined to that area but not for long. I can tell this because I can see the buildings and the bridges in the media's pictures. That is my stamping ground when I am there. I lived 5 minutes from the main square. I recognize the areas. They are the places of my second 'home', the ministry. The U.S. Embassy is in the same neighborhood. By the way, all but essential personnel are being sent out of Egypt as of today.

Are my Egyptian friends safe? So far, yes. Thanks be to God. Please pray for them and all the people.

I will try and write more as time passes and as I learn more. I am hoping to return to Egypt in May with a group of adults for a study seminar in Egypt which I will be leading. If things don't settle down soon, that trip may be cancelled by the university. Even if it is, I still may return for a few weeks. It is part of my ministry to 'Build a Bridge of Peace and Understanding' between our two countries. I will keep you updated.

Blessings and give gratitude for our freedoms,
Mary Ann Pevas O.P.

(sent to Dr Patricia Madigan OP - Dominican Centre for Interfaith, Ministry, Education and Research (CIMER) www.cimer.org.au/)

The Dominican Institute of Oriental Studies is a team of about twenty scholars, mainly Dominican friars, but not exclusively. About ten of them live in Cairo, where they devote themselves to research, to the IDEO's library and welcome visitors and readers. Those who live outside of Egypt lecture in Universities or work in research centres. About fifteen other scholars are supporting them; they also work at a better knowledge and understanding of the Arab-Muslim cultural heritage, in order to promote dialogue between cultures and civilization. This project of an encounter with Islam, on a cultural level and free from any form of proselytising, is greatly due to friar Georges Anawati, an Egyptian Dominican, now internationally renowned. He remains a reference in the field of Medieval Arab philosophy. As he, the IDEO is mindful to be scientifically rigorous while maintaining a favourable a priori in its approach to the Muslim world. Cairo is an ideal location for this task because it is one the Muslim world's cultural capitals: publishing, cultural life and proximity to Al-Alzhar University are valuable assets among others.

Today, several projects keep busy the members of the IDEO:

- ▶ First of all: welcoming to our library Egyptian and foreign students /scholars who are looking not only for documentation, but also for support in their research in a certain intellectual environment;
- ▶ Publishing of research papers in the MIDEO, the Institute's review, but also in other scientific publications;
- ▶ Welcoming relatively large groups of people or well-known individuals visiting Cairo, who ask us to share with them our vision of the Arab-Muslim world and of inter-religious dialogue;
- ▶ Participation at different levels of Egyptian society (for example: The Council of Cultural Affairs) or in foreign institutes, where these matters are discussed.

Without a doubt, current international events vindicate George Anawati's remarkable intuition!
<http://www.ideo-cairo.org>

Congratulations to our Dominican Sisters in Aotearoa New Zealand

On their Chapter, and our good wishes to their new leadership team: Sisters Mary Anna Baird, Raewyn Benzie, Margaret Butler, Judith McGinley and Carmel Walsh (Prioress).

Iraqi Dominican Sister appears before US Congress

USA - Sr. Dursty Farnan, OP writes on Facebook: Pray for one of our Dominican Sisters who will give testimony on behalf of the plight of Iraqi Christians in Congress, Thursday Jan. 20th from 10:00-12:00 noon.

Sister did an amazing presentation at the hearing. The hearing went from 10:00 am to 1:45 PM. She was confident and gave a moving and powerful testimony on behalf of the Christians.

Dom Life/DSI

New Ministry in Kenya

Inspired by the work of other lay missionaries from Michigan, four Adrian Dominican Sisters have volunteered to work with orphaned children in Africa. Sisters Maurine Barzantni, OP; Kathryn Cliatt, OP; Christa Marsik, OP; and Renee Richie, OP left Adrian in mid-October and have been settling into their new ministries at The Children's Village orphanage in Kenya. There, they serve as a caring presence to the children, visiting the classrooms, offering personal and group therapy, providing prayer opportunities, and working with the children on creative projects

Dom Life/DSI

Dominican Calendar

Feb-3 Bl. Peter of Ruffia (1320-1365) Italian, priest, Inquisitor General, martyred by heretics. AKA Peter de Ruffi; Peter of Ruffia; Peter Cambiani: Peter Cambiano av Ruffi.

Bl. Anthony Pavoni (1326-1374) Italian, priest, inquisitor, martyred by heretics.

Bl. Bartholomew Cerveri (1420-1466) Italian, priest, Master of Theology, inquisitor, martyred by heretics.

Feb-4 St. Catherine de' Ricci (1522-1590) [M] Italian, cloistered sister, mystic, stigmatist, canonized 1747.

Feb-7 Anniversary of deceased fathers and mothers of Dominicans.

Please send contributions – short paragraphs – about Dominican Life in your area to archives5@bigpond.com.au – OFTEN!